

**New York Daily News - <http://www.nydailynews.com>****Raid nets wanted Iraqi chief**

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WASHINGTON - A senior Baath Party leader on the U.S. military's most-wanted list was arrested by Iraqi police yesterday during a raid on his home in a Baghdad suburb.

The capture of Mohammed Zimam Abdul Razaq leaves only 10 top figures still at large from Saddam Hussein's regime. Abdul Razaq was No.41 - the four of spades - in the military's deck of cards of top Iraqi fugitives.

Deputy Interior Minister Ahmed Kadhum Ibrahim touted the arrest as evidence that the still-rebuilding Iraqi police force "can be depended upon in the fight against terrorism."

He was looking to give his troops a boost a day after insurgents attacked a police station in Fallujah, leaving nearly 25 Iraqi cops dead.

Also yesterday, the top American in Baghdad said that the U.S.-led coalition is determined to cede political control to Iraqis by June 30, even as some critics say Iraq isn't ready for self-rule.

Though married to the deadline, U.S. administrator Paul Bremer did back off his resistance to picking an interim Iraqi government through anything other than regional caucuses, saying he'll wait to review a United Nations report expected soon.

Shiite leaders have demanded direct elections, and a UN envoy said last week that it may be possible to send Iraqis to the polls this year.

"We've said all along we're open to alternatives," Bremer told ABC's "This Week." "We want to stick with the date."

But many Iraq experts fear instability if the occupation ends too soon, citing the possibility of a civil war breaking out. They also fear rushed elections could place in power a Shiite Muslim state aligned with U.S. enemy Iran.

"[Iraq] is absolutely not ready for a handover on June 30," Rep. Steve Israel (D-L.I.), who just returned from Iraq, told Fox News. "This has to be based on security and democracy in Iraq and not based on a presidential election timetable."

In other developments, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said Saddam, now in U.S. custody, should have his prisoner of war status yanked so he can stand trial.

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